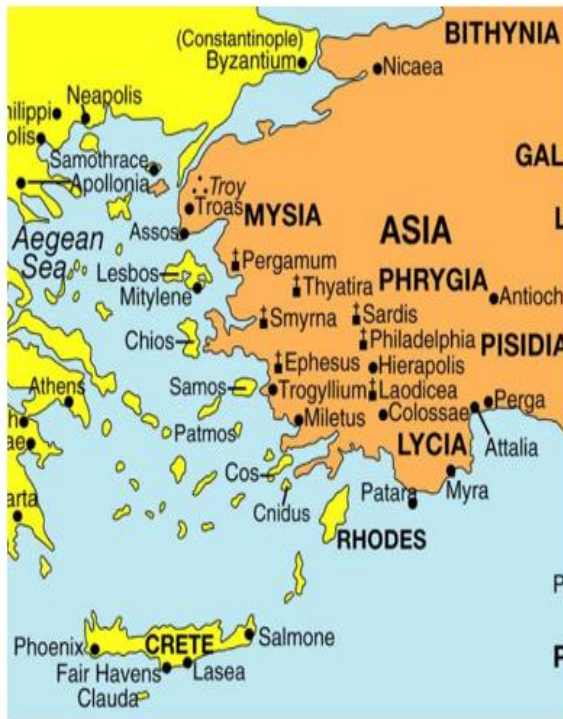


COLOSSIANS

A

COMMENTARY



COLOSSIANS

Do you want a quick reference handbook for how to be a good Christian? Then read Colossians. In four short chapters and only 95 verses, Paul gives us the “Q” card for living by the Gospel of Grace. I have been a Christian for 80 years, but it has only been in the last 30 years that I have pursued a deeper understanding of the Written Word. Not until I sat down to write this commentary, did I really grasp how deep and enlightening Colossians truly is.

NOTE: I started writing context papers and commentaries as a personal study tool. A friend read some and suggested I should share my thoughts with others. That is what I am doing now.

There is no record of Paul ever visiting Colossae or the Lycus river valley. So why was Paul so interested in the valley. While in jail Paul had gotten to know a young convert named Onesimus. Onesimus, a runaway slave, had served and aided Paul for some time. His legal owner, Philemon was a resident of Colossae. It is believed that Onesimus accompanied Tychicus as he carried both the letter to Philemon and the letter to the

Colossians. Read the letter to Philemon for more details surrounding Paul, Onesimus and Philemon.

Epaphras came to Paul while he was in jail. There is much debate on which jail this was. It could have been in Rome or Ephesus. The location is not important. It is simply mentioned with a warning not to get preoccupied with details with no real bearing on the message. Epaphras' message to Paul was simply that there was a growing community of Christians, full of grace, in the Lycus river valley. These communities were undergoing a notable growth in faith, but were under some extreme pressure.

Although the letter is clearly addressed to the fellowship in Colossae it becomes clear within the text that it is meant for the cluster of fellowships located in the Valley of the River Lycus and it should be read to the other fellowships as well. These fellowships were in three cities just a few miles apart, Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea. Paul did not establish nor visited these churches before this letter was written. These fellowships in the Lycus river valley most likely, spread and grew from the work of Epaphras, a student of Paul. The Lycus river valley churches had not benefitted from an in-depth, long term, instruction like the

neighboring Ephesus fellowship had received, therefore they were more vulnerable to the pollution of the world.

There were two major ideologies that were polluting the fellowships of the Lycus river valley.

There were those who were determined to inject Jewish law and tradition into the Gospel of Grace. They were pushing hard for circumcision and food restrictions as part of the Christian life style. Also, there were the Greek spiritualists. They were trying to inject a belief in a kind of secret knowledge that came only by way of special revelation (Gnosticism).

These false teachings moved the focus of the Christians to the worldly and away from Christ. Anything that draws your focus away from Jesus and to the world is an agent or tool of the evil one.

Why is the letter to the Colossians so important to Christians today?

- 1, It defines the good news of Jesus Christ in an enthusiastic and upbeat way.

- 2, Paul expertly and effectively discusses challenges to the first century Christians that we still face today.

3, Paul puts forth clear-cut and fundamental guides for Christian life and behavior that have been valid throughout the ages.

Paul opens the letter with the customary from, to and a blessing. It is addressed to the brothers in Colosse, but later in the letter we will see that it is in fact written to three churches in the Lycus river valley.

Chapter 1 verses 1 through 14 is commonly captioned as the Thanksgiving and Prayer section of the letter. But there is more.

In verses 1 through 8 there seems to be a feeling among the Lycus valley fellowships that they are alone in the world. So, Paul slips in an account on how the Gospel is growing and expanding all over the world.

We know that Paul had not visited the Lycus valley and did not establish fellowships there. Here we get a clue that Epaphras is the one who brought the Gospel to the Lycus valley. Note also that Paul gives Epaphras an endorsement as a true believer and teacher.

Read verses 9 through 29 very carefully. The why and mechanism of salvation is explained.

Paul starts chapter 2 with a statement of the spiritual struggle he has for all those Christians he has not been able to personally touch. His wish is that they come to understand the mystery of God that is revealed through the Gospel of Christ.

We must remember that Paul is stressing the Salvation of eternity. He is concerned about what will determine our relationship with God for an eternity not a mortal lifespan. As Christians we receive a spiritual circumcision of all unnecessary mortal thoughts and desires. This comes from a baptism of the Holy Spirit not of water. Dead to sin
ALIVE IN CHRIST.

From verse 13 to verse 19 he explains that we were removed from the law and rituals of the temple and placed under the Grace of God.

Paul ends the chapter in verse 20 to 23 with one of his strongest rebukes of the law.

Chapters 3 through 4:1 lay down the basic guideline for Holy Christian behavior (v1-4). He starts with how we get the grace. Then he lists all the things we must cast off (v5-11). In verses 12 through 17 are the fellowship interrelationships.

Now for verse 18 to 25, often captioned “Rules for Christian Households”.

A lot of people would like to strip these verses out of the bible. To these closed-minded people, I say take a deep breath and think about the mission Jesus gave to Paul. Paul was not an apostle of social justice. Paul was the apostle of the Gospel of Grace. As stated earlier in this commentary it was necessary for Paul to work within the social boundaries of the time. Within those boundaries women were subservient to their husbands. Slavery and indentured debt were accepted social realities in Paul’s time. If he came on as a reformer of social justice, he would lose 90% of the people he needed to reach. What you are now is not important to Paul, where you will be in eternity is.

The final greetings and closing of the letter are found in v7 – v18. They contain personal comments and accolades for those who have helped Paul in his mission.

I hope you can go, read, and find a deeper meaning to the letter Paul wrote to **US**, called **COLOSSIANS**.